

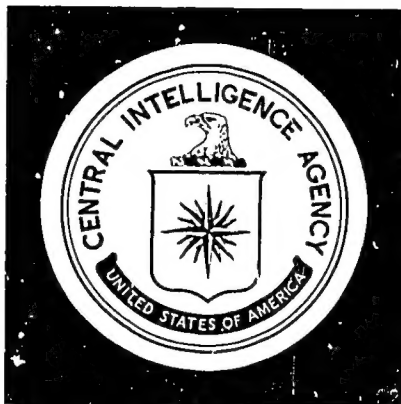
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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

Colombia: Politics in a New Key

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№ 650

11 August 1972

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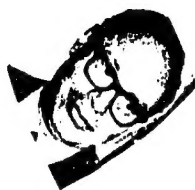
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Official Liberals

Popular Conservatives



ANAPO



Dissident Liberals



Dissident Conservatives

COLOMBIA:

POLITICS

in a

NEW

KEY

ACORDADO LEGISLATIVO NUMERO 1 DE 1959
(septiembre 15)
"Acta de la Constitución Nacional" (alternación
de los partidos en el Poder).
El Congreso de Colombia

DECRETA:

Artículo 1. En los tres (3) periodos constitu-
cionales comprendidos entre el siete (7) de agosto de
1959 y el siete (7) de agosto de 1962, el
Presidente de la República será desempe-
ñado alternativamente, por ciudadanos que per-
tenezcan a los dos partidos tradicionales, el conservador
y el liberal, de tal manera que el Presidente que per-
tenezca a uno cualquiera de dichos periodos per-
tenezca al partido distinto del de su inmediato ante-
cesor. Por consiguiente, para iniciar la alternación a
comenzar entre el siete (7) de agosto de mil novecien-
tos sesenta y dos (1962) y el siete (7) de agosto de
mil novecientos sesenta y seis (1966) será desem-
peñado por un ciudadano que pertenezca al partido
conservador.
La elección de Presidente de la República que se
haya de celebrar en el periodo comprendido entre el
siete (7) de agosto de mil novecientos sesenta y
seis (1966) y el siete (7) de agosto de mil novecien-
tos sesenta y siete (1967) será de conformidad con
lo dispuesto en este artículo.
En caso de falta de este, será de su
competencia.

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Genuine political contention is returning to Colombia after a 14-year hiatus. For the first time since the artificial National Front system of parity in elective and appointive offices was contrived in 1957, the Liberal and Conservative parties are competing freely for the electorate's favor. In addition, other parties are permitted to appear on official ballots.

The end of the president's term of office in 1974 coincides with the end of the National Front on the national level. The phasing out of the front began in April 1970 on the local and departmental levels with open contests for assemblymen in all 22 departments and councilmen in 922 municipalities. The local and departmental elections of April 1972, coming midway through the last presidential term of the National Front, gave some foretaste of the presidential election in 1974.

The Liberal and Conservative parties are both split, opening the way for minor parties to play a role. The largest of the minor parties, former dictator Gustavo Rojas' National Popular Alliance, is jockeying to overcome its poor showing in April. It may play a pivotal role in the presidential contest.

The National Front

Historically, Colombians have taken their politics seriously, even personally, and the mountainous nature of the country has emphasized regional political rivalries. Bitter animosity between the Liberal and Conservative parties since the mid-19th century fostered a heritage of violence in which physical assault and assassination became established political tactics. The dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla between 1953 and 1957 attempted to put an end to such violence, as did the National Front that followed.

The National Front formula was devised in 1957 by leaders of the two major parties. They feared that a return to unguided political activity after five years of monolithic rule by Rojas would mean a return to violence. Moreover, they viewed the tendency of such violence to degenerate into banditry, terrorism, and guerrilla activity as a threat to the existence of political parties. Consequently, they contrived a system that provided, by constitutional amendment, a "cooling off" period of 12 years (1958-1970) during which Liberals and Conservatives were to have absolute parity in elective and appointive offices throughout the country. This was later extended to 1974. The arrangement, aside from eliminating the internecine warfare between the two parties, precluded any return to the radical populism of Rojas.

During the National Front period the presidency has been alternated between the two parties. Each president has appointed six Liberals and six Conservatives to a 13-man Cabinet, with the thirteenth position—the defense portfolio—being filled by a nominally apolitical military officer. All executive agencies have been staffed by Liberals and Conservatives equally. If necessary, new positions have been created and filled in

Presidents Under the National Front

1958-1962	Alberto Lleras Camargo (Liberal)
1962-1966	Guillermo Leon Valencia (Conservative)
1966-1970	Carlos Lleras Restrepo (Liberal)
1970-1974	Misael Pastrana Borrero (Conservative)

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CONGRESS (1970-74)		
	Senate (118 members)	House (210 members)
Liberals	53	81
ANAPO	6	24
Total	59	105
Conservatives	33	63
ANAPO	26	42
Total	59	105

order to achieve parity. Each death, resignation, or retirement has necessitated a rebalancing of personnel.

On official ballots, half of the seats in each legislative body have been contested by Liberal candidates and the other half by Conservatives. This quest for parity has led to extraordinary artificiality in some rural constituencies that had a history of voting overwhelmingly for one or the other party. It has also obliged candidates who would not otherwise have identified themselves with one of the two major parties to do so to achieve elective office at all.

This was the situation facing Rojas' National Popular Alliance (ANAPO) before the elections in April 1970. Its candidates had to run under the banner of one or the other of the two official parties. For example, the Congress elected in 1970 has a number of ANAPO adherents calling themselves either Liberals or Conservatives.

Thus, the constitutional demand for parity has been assiduously observed while the spirit of the law has been gently abused. In Congress, ANAPO is a third party in all but name and will remain so until 1974. In departmental and local governments where parity officially ended in April 1970, ANAPO is now a fully functional third party.

The April Elections

The local and departmental elections last April, coming midway through the final presi-

dential term of the National Front, were regarded as a preview of the 1974 general election. ANAPO was free to compete and the various Liberal and Conservative factions were at liberty to consider alignments among themselves, as they surely will two years from now.

In the 1970 general elections, former dictator Rojas, running as a Conservative, came within 60,000 votes of winning the presidency. He did this by preaching his persuasive populism to voters who had grown apathetic in more than a decade of essentially non-competitive politics. Riding his coattails, ANAPO gained control of 16 of the 22 departmental assemblies and about two thirds of the municipal councils. As the 1972 elections approached, the Liberals and Conservatives reasoned that a strong ANAPO showing would call for some kind of Liberal-Conservative cooperation in order to defeat the common enemy in 1974. There were even suggestions that a serious ANAPO threat could be effectively met by extending the National Front through 1978.

But ANAPO did poorly in the 1972 elections—worse, in fact, than the orthodox politicians had dared to hope. Voter participation was low, as it always is in mid-term elections. ANAPO received only 18.7 percent of the vote. It emerged from the slow and cautious tally without a controlling faction in a departmental assembly and in



Former Dictator
Gustavo Rojas

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fewer than 5 percent of the nation's municipalities. The defeat elated the Liberals and Conservatives, and all but ended the talk of extending the National Front.

At the same time, the Liberals bested the Conservatives by a margin of 3-to-2. The various Liberal factions got 46.3 percent of the vote, while the more unified Conservatives chalked up 30.7 percent. Minor parties and voided ballots accounted for the remaining 4.3 percent of the vote.

The political mood of the country has been changed by the April elections. Liberal and Conservative leaders no longer consider ANAPO an overriding factor for 1974 and are proceeding toward the demise of the National Front in an orderly fashion. They anticipate that the politics that will arise from its ashes will be orthodox. The Liberals are confident that on the wings of their victory they can achieve the party unity essential to winning the presidency. The Conservatives, less divided than the Liberals, are equally confident. The Colombian political establishment is euphoric about simultaneously ushering out the National Front and ANAPO.

The euphoria cannot last. By 1974, the relative positions of the Liberals, Conservatives, and ANAPO are sure to undergo significant changes.

elation of the front-running Liberals is already being tempered by the lack of movement toward party unification and the knowledge that none of their factions individually is as strong as the much more united Conservative Party.

Party Alignments

LIBERAL PARTY—The party is profoundly divided. It had managed a surface unity during its most recent turn in the presidency (1966-70). With Carlos Lleras Restrepo, a member of what was to become the party's dissident wing, in the president's office, the official Liberals had no option other than unity. By 1971, however, when their term had ended and the Liberals had no prospect of another under the National Front, the internal division reached serious proportions.

MAJOR PARTY RETURNS IN APRIL 1972 ELECTION

Departments and Territories	Liberals	Conservatives	ANAPO
Antioquia	119,020	117,002	70,426
Arauca	4,580	839	165
Atlantico	81,823	52,660	30,965
Bolivar	68,662	45,913	8,746
Boyaca	60,158	47,658	38,992
Caldas	30,610	42,217	16,917
Caqueta	7,344	3,997	3,373
Cauca	51,916	26,251	11,485
Cesar	22,041	15,918	9,493
Choco	27,086	6,607	1,662
Cordoba	66,654	39,797	15,642
Cundinamarca	221,853	101,829	83,577
Huila	29,902	29,506	12,871
La Guajira	13,801	15,496	6,675
Magdalena	51,953	30,590	7,447
Meta	9,583	7,639	5,561
Narino	56,449	43,833	16,470
Norte de Santander	38,283	44,098	33,142
Putumayo	5,275	4,316	1,672
Quindio	26,775	11,637	7,917
Risaralda	32,347	18,575	13,809
San Andres	3,014	1,820	354
Santander	80,863	61,077	47,367
Sucre	42,830	25,301	4,064
Tolima	75,605	34,607	19,720
Valle	155,281	88,516	91,309
Total	1,383,708	917,699	559,821

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In general, the dissident Liberals, led by Lleras Restrepo and Alfonso Lopez Michelsen, are the party's progressives and radicals. They extol the reform program of the Lleras Restrepo administration as a model for the future. They concentrate on regional and local action, principally because the official wing controls the national party organization. Lleras Restrepo himself cultivated a statesmanlike image prior to the April elections and did not campaign actively until the days just preceding the election. Lopez Michelsen,

on the other hand, was as vitriolic in attacking the official Liberals as he was in attacking the Conservatives and ANAPO. Since the election, Lleras Restrepo has descended from his pedestal somewhat and has engaged in a bitter public battle with his cousin, Alberto Lleras Camargo, the principal architect of the National Front, the first president under the front, and the elder statesman of the official Liberals.

Lleras Camargo is, in fact, no longer an active politician. His participation in Liberal politics is generally as an adviser. The main active figure among the official Liberals is Julio Cesar Turbay, whom Lleras Camargo supports as much as he supports anyone. Turbay considers his group the only legitimate Liberal organization, and indeed it is the larger of the two and the better organized. The strength of the official Liberals lies in the political machine—dominated by *caudillos* or “bosses”—at the departmental and local levels. One important factor in the defeat of ANAPO in April was the attention paid by the local machines to the middle-class vote, much of which had gone to ANAPO in 1970. As a rule, Turbay and his official Liberals lean to the right and, in fact, have supported the Conservative administration of President Pastrana. With the mid-term elections over, the real issue within the Liberal Party is whether the split can be bridged by 1974 or, failing that, which faction will become the stronger.

One proposal has been advanced that may provide a moderately satisfactory resolution of the Liberals' internal conflict. Spurred on by Lleras Restrepo, Liberals representing six departments where the official and dissident factions did not run separate lists in April are seeking a formula for party unification. Calling themselves a “pre-convention,” these Liberals have decided to poll Liberal councilmen in all municipalities to determine what type of party leadership and organization they favor. Each councilman's vote is to be weighted in accordance with the number of votes that elected him. This would favor the dissident Liberals because of their strength in the cities. Needless to say, Turbay and official Liberal spokesmen have come out against this proposal.

PARTY LEADERS

Official Liberals

Julio Cesar Turbay
Alberto Lleras Camargo

Dissident Liberals

Carlos Lleras Restrepo
Alfonso Lopez Michelsen

Official Conservatives

Mariano Ospina Perez
Alvaro Gomez Hurtado
Miguel Pastrana Borrero

Dissident Conservatives

J. Emilio Valderrama
Hernan Jaramillo Ocampo

Popular Conservatives

Belisario Betancur

ANAPO

Gustavo Rojas Pinilla
Maria Eugenia Rojas de Moreno

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Carlos Lleras Restrepo and his wife, April 1972

Liberals of both factions agree that the dissidents would receive about 65 percent of the vote in such a poll. If the scheme goes through, the dissidents would control the party's nominating convention and would be likely to name Lleras Restrepo. In that event, the official faction would either be trapped into some semblance of party unity or be driven to hold its own convention and nominate its own candidate. Since competition between two Liberals in 1974 would go a long way toward electing a Conservative president, the proposed poll may be carried out and could set the stage for a semblance of reunification.

CONSERVATIVE PARTY—The Conservatives have three factions, but their differences are much less deep than those that split the Liberals. The overwhelming majority of the party is in the official group led by Alvaro Gomez Hurtado and elder statesman Mariano Ospina Perez. President Misael Pastrana is nominally a member of this faction. A so-called popular faction, now largely in decline, supported the candidacy of Belisario Betancur against that of Pastrana in 1970. A small dissident group, led by J. Emilio Valderrama and Hernan Jaramillo Ocampo, is gaining in importance and could supply a compromise candidate for 1974. The dissidents' strength is centered in Antioquia Department, normally a major source

of leadership and financing for the Conservative Party as a whole.

Alvaro Gomez of the official group has already announced his candidacy for the presidency in 1974, but this does not mean the Conservatives are speeding toward party unity. Although Gomez' leadership is grudgingly acknowledged by his faction and by the bulk of the party, he is not seen as an attractive presidential candidate. The widely respected Ospina can make or break party unity, and he is withholding judgment. He has suggested that the unraveling of the party could be minimized by extending the National Front to one more pair of Liberal-Conservative presidential terms.

The dissident Conservatives, in effect challenging the leadership of both Gomez and Ospina, have announced the tentative candidacy of Jaramillo. The reformist position taken by Jaramillo makes him popular with Conservatives in the cities and his association with agriculture pleases Conservatives in rural areas. But a Conservative Party united under Jaramillo competing openly with a Liberal Party under Lleras Restrepo would offer the voters little choice, as the two have similar views. The candidacy of Jaramillo may be no more than a tentative effort to gauge the dissident Liberal's views regarding a coalition. A united Conservative Party in combination with roughly half of the Liberal Party would be immensely powerful. If it could remain intact, it could prove unbeatable in 1974.

ANAPO—Leadership rests wholly with Gustavo Rojas Pinilla and his daughter, Maria Eugenia Rojas de Moreno. There are no internal factions. A variety of often mutually conflicting currents constitute what passes for a party policy. In essence, ANAPO is a populist vehicle for the lower and lower-middle classes, those Colombians least attended to by the traditional parties. The second-level leadership of ANAPO has been made up of unsuccessful Liberal and Conservative politicians who rallied to Rojas—particularly when he almost won the presidency in 1970—in hope of tasting power.

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The crushing defeat suffered by ANAPO in April has led to significant changes within the party. The most obvious change is that Rojas probably cannot again come within 60,000 votes of being president. As a corollary, some doubt is cast on the value to the party of his daughter. Statistics from the April election indicate that the Liberals who took temporary refuge in ANAPO have now left it. Some of Rojas' advisers are recommending that he personally select and support a Liberal candidate. This would attract back some or all of the Liberals who defected in April and would add to the Liberal Party's unification problems. ANAPO has made tentative moves in this direction by forming a coalition with the dissident Liberals in several municipal councils. Others of Rojas' advisers recommend that he himself run for president, rather than the more energetic Maria Eugenia. It may be that the personal appeal of the old dictator himself is all that can revitalize the party by 1974.

When Rojas nearly won the 1970 presidential election, he was one of four Conservative candidates running under the National Front system; there was no Liberal candidate. Many of his votes came from Liberals. In 1974 there will be at least one candidate from each major party; so there is likely to be little protest voting for an ANAPO candidate. Since, however, the Liberals will have trouble fixing on a single candidate and since the Conservatives will probably try to form a coalition with the dissident Liberals, ANAPO's role in the 1974 election could still be pivotal.

Prospect

The dust from the mid-term elections has settled. ANAPO is much less a political factor



Maria Rojas de Moreno ejected from Congress.

among the electorate than had been feared. This does not imply that its role in the next campaign and election will be insignificant. The next president of Colombia is not very likely to come from ANAPO but, if election coalitions become necessary, he may owe the party some debt. Moreover, simultaneous with the presidential election will be elections for the National Congress. A congressional standoff between Liberals and Conservatives could make it possible for ANAPO to hold the key to legislative action, as for all practical purposes it does now. In addition, should no candidate emerge with a clear majority, a runoff in the incumbent Congress would be necessary, and ANAPO's participation in the selection of a president would be greater still.

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